

# Other 'Roads to Nowhere'

Insights in the Journey to Crime

Christophe Vandeviver & dr. Stijn Van Daele

November 14, 2012

# Thought experiment

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Other 'Roads to Nowhere'



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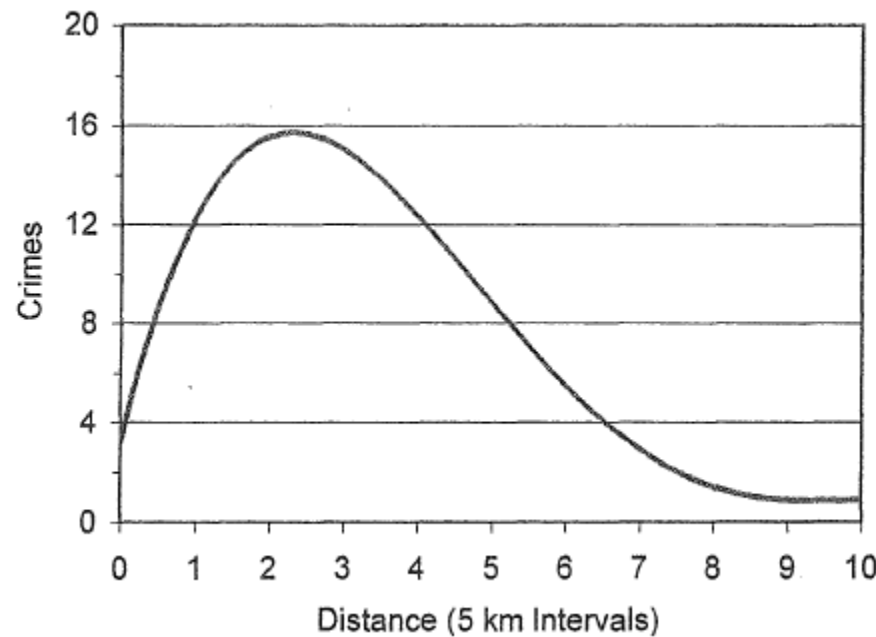
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# Journey to crime

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Source: Rossmo (2000, p. 120)

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# Knowledge gap (1)

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## JTC studies rely on local, intra-city police data

- Notable exceptions: Smith, Bond & Townsley (2009); Wiles & Costello (2000)

## Consequences of using local, intra-city police data

- Full spectrum of crime trips not studied (cf. Hesseling, 1992)
  - Local and inbound crime trips included
  - Non-local (outbound) crime trips excluded
- Local geographic range (cf. Hesseling, 1992)
- Danger of circular arguments

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# Knowledge gap (2)

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## Long crime trips as outliers (Stangeland, 1998)

- “*distance uncharacteristic of the distances being travelled by others in the sample*” (Barker, 2000: 62-3)
- E.g. *inter alia* Clare, Fernandez, & Morgan, 2009; Fritzson, 2001; Hesseling, 1992b; Laukkanen, Santtila, Jern, & Sandnabba, 2008; Lundrigan & Czarnomski, 2006; Townsley & Sidebottom, 2010; Turner, 1969; Wikström, 1991)

## Starting point of crime trip

- Registered legal address. Convenient, but ...
- ... transient and homeless people (cf. Rossmo, 2000)?
- ... other reference points, e.g. pub or friend's place (Stangeland, 1998; Van Daele, 2009; Wiles & Costello, 2000)

## Ecological fallacy

- Individual distance decay v. aggregated distance decay (Rengert, Piquero & Jones, 1999; Van Koppen & De Keijser, 1997)

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# 'Other roads' (1)

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## Wiles & Costello (2000)

- Non-criminal mobility increased – what about criminal mobility?
- Most crime trips are short, but long crime trips present
  - Directed towards known areas

## Polisenska (2008)

- Long crime trips present
  - Directed towards unknown areas
  - Weekend cottages

## Morselli & Royer (2008)

- Criminal mobility is profitable (the further they travel, the more they earn)

## Smith, Bond & Townsley (2009)

- Ecological fallacy in JTC research (JTC data is nested)
- Aggregated DD, no individual DD
  - Most crime trips are short ≠ most offenders prefer targets close to home

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# 'Other roads' (2)

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## What we learn from these studies?

- Burgeoning alternative research tradition
- Results are insightful and challenging
- But ... questions remain
  - Departure and target areas of mobile criminals?
  - Profitability of mobility?
  - Mobility as measurement error?
  - New technological advances and mobility?

## Opportunities for new and exciting research into JTC!

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# Our 'roads'

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## Mobility of foreign 'itinerant crime groups'

- Van Daele, S. (2012). *Extending offender mobility: Investigating mobile offenders through the case study of 'itinerant crime groups'* (Vol. 43). Antwerpen: Maklu.

## Outbound offending

- Van Daele, S., & Vander Beken, T. (2011). Outbound Offending: The Journey to Crime and Crime Sprees. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 31(1), 70-78.

## Directional consistency

- Van Daele, S., & Bernasco, W. (2012). Exploring Directional Consistency in Offending: The Case of Residential Burglary in The Hague. *Journal of Investigative Psychology and Offender Profiling*, 135-148.

## Rational choice and long crime trips

- Vandeviver, C. – PhD project, 4 years

## Technological developments and awareness space

- Van Daele, S. & Vandeviver, C. (in review).

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# Mobility of foreign 'itinerant crime groups'

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## Case study of particular type of offenders

- Eastern European gangs of criminals committing all sorts of property crimes
- Quite an impact on crime figures
  - 25%?
- ... and on police organisation
  - ≠ districts
  - international component

Asks for more profound analysis of their mobility patterns

Start of our research line

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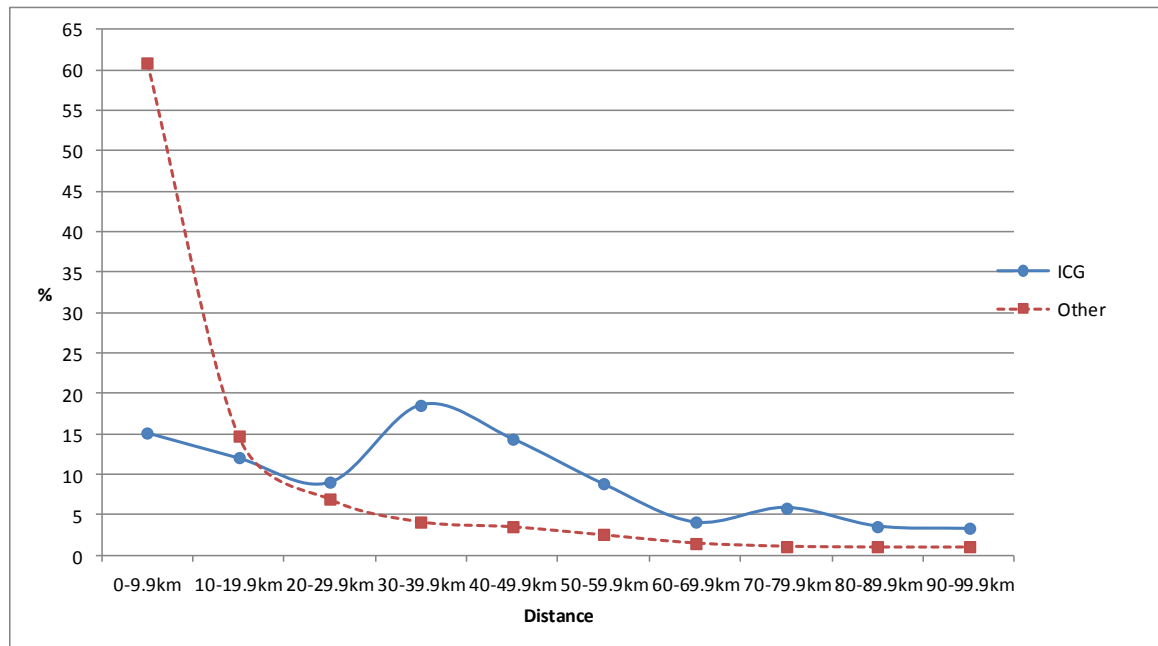
# ICG: findings (1)

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## Distance (police stats)

- Travel twice as far on average (34km vs 17km)
- Only moderate decay



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# ICG: findings (2)

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## Anchor points (case files)

- Are flexible at individual level
- But more or less fixed at group level
  - Same neighbourhoods
  - Does not account for larger distances -> large distances ARE large distances

## Target areas (case files and interviews)

- Affluent
- Rural (less opportunities)
- Mostly unfamiliar (or merely abstract)

Findings mostly not corresponding with those of other JTC research

Case study (e.g. foreigners: routines? awareness space?) -> validity?

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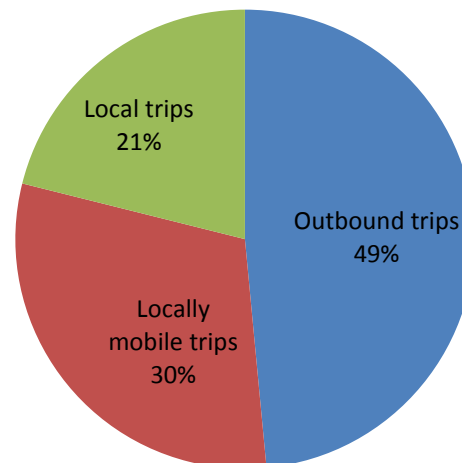
# Outbound offending (1)

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## Focus on outbound offending

- Start in city but end outside it
- Typically overlooked in JTC research
- Rare offending pattern (?)
  - Away from criminal opportunity structures, daily routines, crime generators...



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# Outbound offending (2)

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Outbound offenders (min. 5 crimes, 90% outbound)

Profit maximization?!

- Rich pickings? Yes (compared with local) ... and no (only outbound)
- Committed near motorways
- Crime sprees

Outbound offending is linked to co-offending

- But NOT because of distant anchor points of accomplices

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# Directional consistency

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## Behavioural consistency

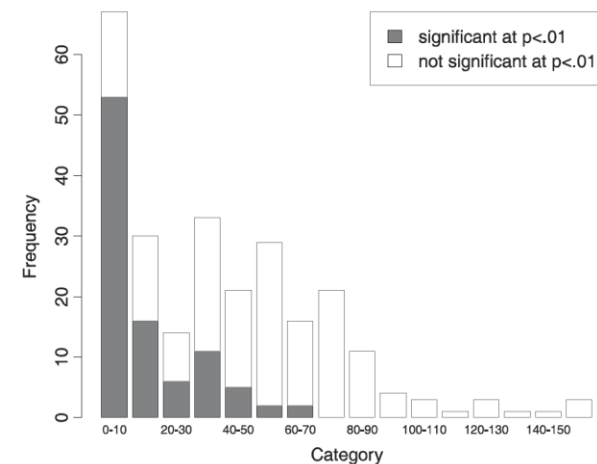
- Human geographic behaviour is stable and predictable
- Reason: time constraints & daily routines

## Research question

- JTC characterised by directional consistency?

## Strong evidence for directional consistency

- 90% of serial offenders is directionally consistent



Source: Van Daele & Bernasco (2012)

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# Rational choice and long crime trips (1)

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## Need to know

- Highlighted knowledge gap
- Questions surrounding initial understanding of long JTC

## Ultimate goal: theory development

- Large-scale quantitative test of established insights in JTC
- Assessment of findings in light of underlying RC framework and previous JTC research results

## Scope

- Non-local recorded crime data (police & public prosecutor)
- Analysis of full spectrum of crime trips (deliberate inclusion of long crime trips)

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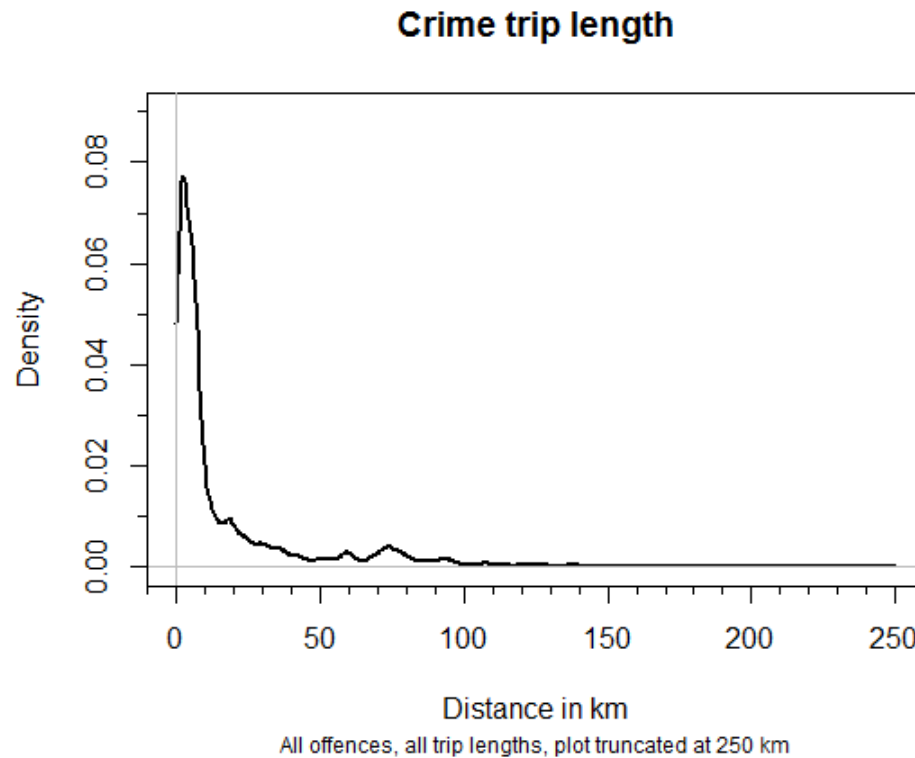
# Rational choice and long crime trips (2)

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Intermediate results: all crime trips in greater Ghent area

	Mean	Median	Min.	Max.	S.D.	N
All offences, all trips	39,41 km	6,25 km	4,68 m	4704,87 km	206,29 km	10478



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# Rational choice and long crime trips (3)

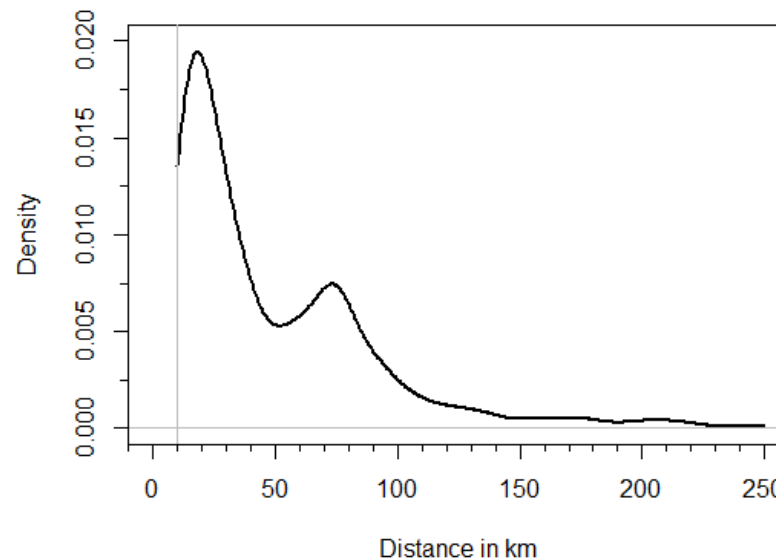
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## Intermediate results: long crime trips in greater Ghent area

Length of crime trip	%	N
< 10 km	64,53	6762
10 – 99,99 km	30,81	3228
100 – 999,99 km	3,83	401
≥ 1000 km	0,83	87
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,00</b>	<b>10478</b>

Long crime trips, min. 10 km



All offences, plot truncated at 250 km

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# Technological evolutions and awareness space (1)

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## Influence of technological applications on awareness space and burglary target selection

### Technological applications

- Google Maps & Google Street View
- Linked to increased burglary risk

### Experiment

- Students as 'burglars'
- 63 participants
- 3 groups: street, online and online w/photo
- 1 week
- Target, official & actual address, 3 nodes

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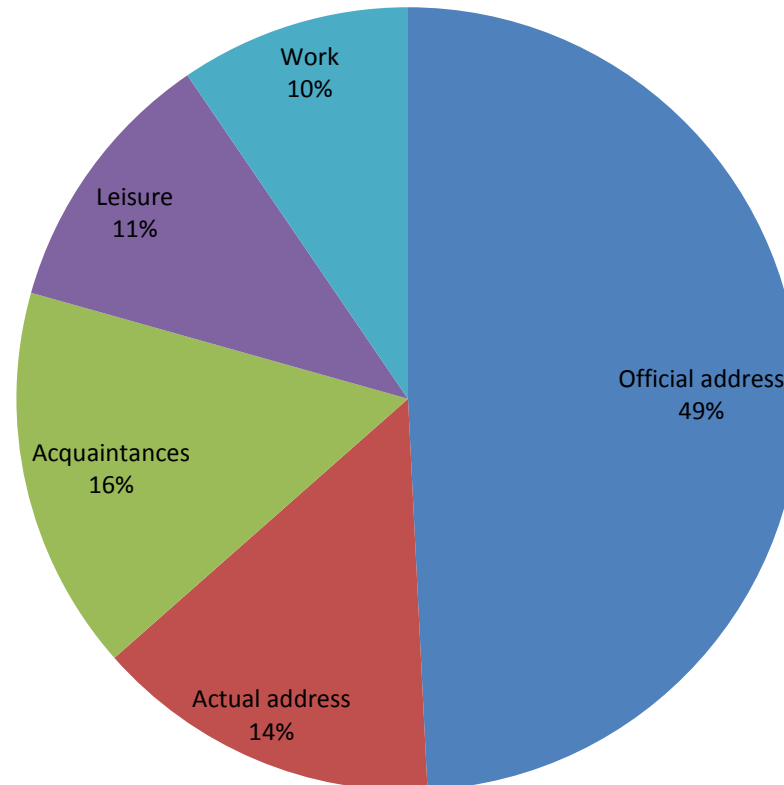
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# Technological evolutions and awareness space (2)

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**% of participants for which a particular node is closest to target**



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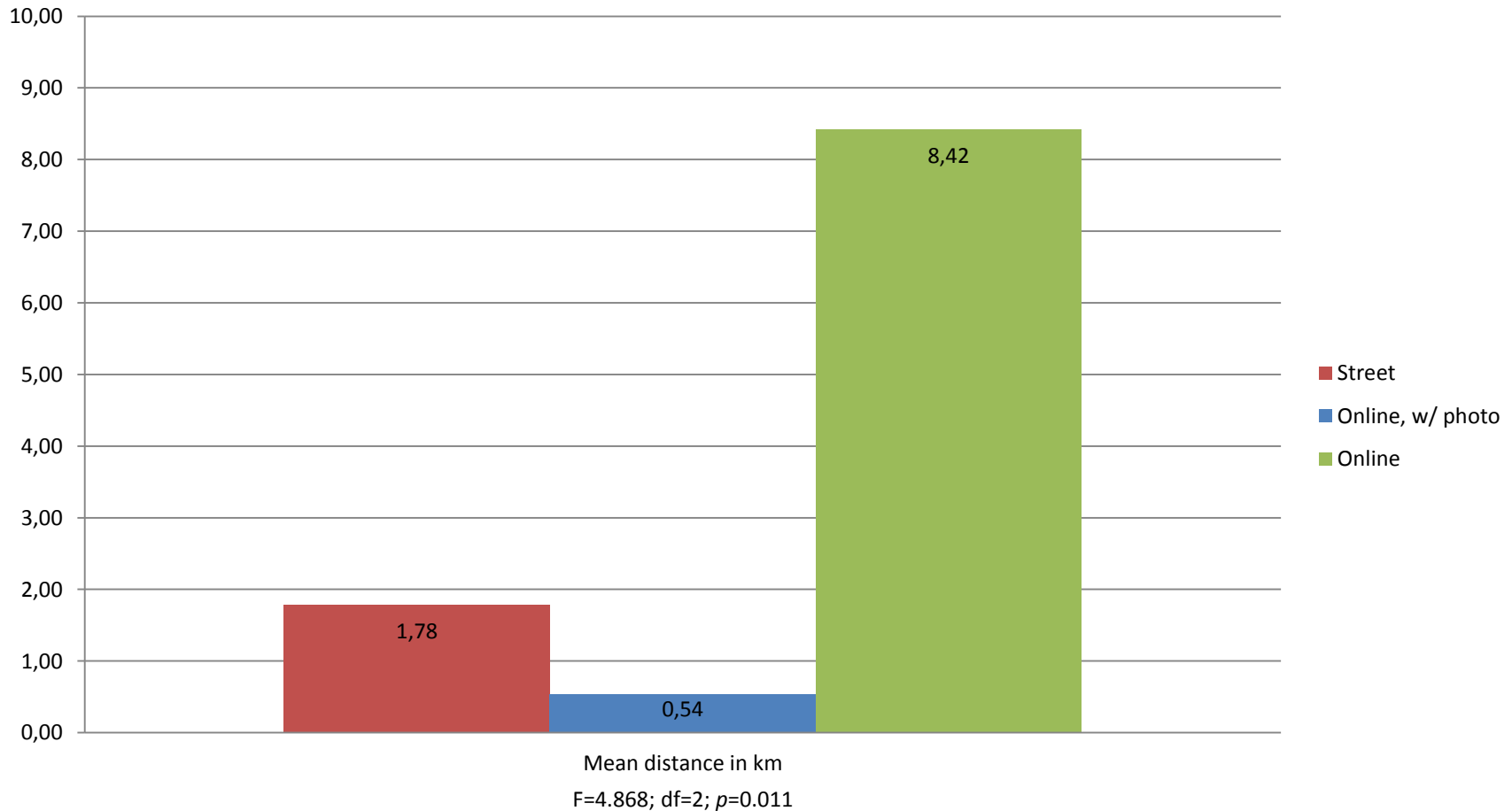
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# Technological evolutions and awareness space (3)

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**Average distance to nearest node (incl. residences) per group**



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# Concluding remarks

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- Recurrent findings in JTC studies
- ... made JTC researchers overlook their research weaknesses and assume general 'mobility rules'
- Thinking outside the box leads to different conclusions
- Smith et al. 2009: "It is not enough to be correct, we must be correct for the right reasons"

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